

Document Citation

Title	Antarjali yatra
Author(s)	Guid.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1988 Nov 30
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Antarjali yatra (The voyage beyond), Ghose, Goutam, 1987

Antarjali Yatra
[Voyage Beyond]
(INDIAN)

A National Film Development Corp. production. Executive producers, Ravi Malik, Debashish Majumdar. Directed by Goutam Ghose. Screenplay, Ghose, with additional dialog by Sunil Gongopadhaya, from a story by Kamal Kumar Majumdar, camera (Eastman-color), Ghose; editor, Moloy Banerjee; music, Ghose; production design, Dilipo Banerjee; art direction, Ashoke Bose; set design, Joyti Chatterjee, Anup Mukherjee; costumes, Neelanjana Ghosh. Reviewed at London Film Festival, Nov. 19, 1988. Running time: 118 MIN.

Baiju Shatrughan Sinha
Sitaram Promode Ganguly
Yashobati Shampa Ghosh

Also with: Basanta Chowdhury, Robi Ghosh, Sajal Roychoudhury, Mohan Agashe, Kalyan Chatterji, Rathin Lahiri.

■ **London** — Set in a crucial and complicated period of Indian history, the 1830s, "Voyage Beyond" makes a strong statement about the clash between outmoded conventions and irrepressible human passions.

Rather than relying on a huge historical canvas to make its points, however, it reduces a complicated story of love and death to its barest bones.

By and large it succeeds, though only a limited arthouse audience will respond to a film so minimalist in its approach that the main action is waiting for a man on a stretcher to die, and where the heroine hardly utters a word, and the only locale is a beachfront along the Ganges.

The dying man is of course a symbol of the Brahmin value system, under particular threat in the period from modern western ideas and practices. Before his funeral pyre is set alight, however, his friends and relatives decide the best way to protect themselves — and profit from their piety — is to procure him a bride. The hapless young woman is expected to defy the new ruling of the colonial government by allowing herself to be burned along with her husband, honoring, that is, the ancient practise of "suttee."

To complicate things, the newlywed bride is alternately encouraged to be brave by her father (who will inherit the dying man's wealth), and urged to rebel by an Untouchable. However, film is not rational in the sense that characters debate issues: the Untouchable mostly rants and raves; the heroine mostly weeps; the dying man comes to life at the oddest moments, displaying wonder-

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LONDON

Antarjali Yatra

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fully funny capacity for jealousy and petulance.

In one powerful scene the heroine demonstrates the bond she feels for her "lord" by saving him from drowning and then wallows in the mud with the Untouchable in an embrace which can only be a prelude to her own doom.

Assured camerawork, disciplined performances and subtle comic touches make this film worth the effort. —*Guid.*

Variety
11/22/88